

**Union Square Civic Advisory Committee (CAC)**  
**Meeting Notes – 6/16/14 at 6 p.m.**  
**Argenziano School**

1. Introduction, meeting format

CAC Co-Chair Anne Tate welcomes the CAC and provides an overview of the meeting for this evening. The meeting will include time for public comment at the beginning and end.

2. Public comment

- a. A member from the Union United coalition explains they are in the process of putting together a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) that they want to sign with a Master Development partner. Asks how the CAC will ensure Union United – “the voice of the community” – is heard at meetings moving forward. Tate responds by announcing formal meeting schedule moving forward (2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month), and invites Union United and other stakeholders to attend.
- b. Someone from SCC asked which criteria the CAC will use to evaluate finalists, and urged the CAC to look to goals outlined by Union United coalition. CAC explains it is premature to look at specific metrics until a Master Developer is selected. Any concerns the SCC has should be put in writing and sent to the CAC and SRA, with a copy to the City. SCC: What are the criteria the CAC is using to narrow down list for recommendation? CAC will not be looking at a specific numbers of jobs, housing, etc. until a developer is selected. If people have specific concerns, please put those concerns in writing to CAC and SRA, copy the City.

3. CAC Presentation on Due Diligence Trip

- a. Mike Dacey:
  - i. Federal Realty’s Bethesda Row: Mostly chains, surrounded by several local businesses. A lot of community and cultural events such as wine tasting and fashion shows.
  - ii. US2: Lakeshore East is huge with multiple 50+ story buildings. The scale didn’t fit to Union Square but the size of the project was impressive. It included significant transportation/infrastructure improvements. University Village was more applicable to Union Square for its size and mix of retail and office space. The housing, while not thrilled with design, offered significant range of options from affordable to single family units. US2 also offers a unique second mortgage program to make housing more affordable for middle-income residents. US2 was impressive for the amount of time they took to understand USQ. The developers really understood what they hoped to achieve early on, through temporary “pop up” spaces and events; really understand business needs.
  - iii. Gerding Edlen: Provided exciting options. The Brewery Blocks were very applicable to USQ. However, there was a lack of information about their intentions for USQ. That said, their values jive with USQ, such as 20-minute living, drawing people to the core, creating inspiring spaces, commitment to union labor. They’re based out of town but have a local design team.

- iv. Federal Realty's Santana Row: Very similar to Bethesda Row. It felt like an island in the context of a bigger city.
- v. The Abbey Group: Like that they talked about a Wellness Center and creating coworking locations in USQ. Emphatic about wanting to start building immediately. They have longstanding relationships in place with both their construction and architecture teams.

4. Q&A from public

- a. Can you crystalize the developers' vision for Union Square? Mike Dacey: Not really.
- b. Schedule of charettes? Ed O'Donnell, Director of Economic Development, explains that the City expects Master Developer to participate in multiple charettes. Immediately, charettes will focus on infrastructure, design and the vision for build out of Block D-2.
- c. Growing the commercial tax base is important – can you characterize Federal Realty's mix of uses? It seems like they have less commercial. Amanda Maher, Economic Development Specialist, explains that Federal's projects are roughly 1/3 retail, 1/3 residential and 1/3 commercial. Federal begins with retail, restaurants and residential to create a critical mass of people that will then draw additional commercial users.

5. Anne provides Alderman Heuston's impressions from the trip:

- a. Gerding Edlen's perception that "design answers everything" makes her nervous. She was thrown off by how large their residential buildings are in Portland. The team seemed to talk the talk with affordable housing, businesses but it's not clear how their efforts in the past translate to USQ. It doesn't feel like they go beyond the buzz words. Additionally, there is some concern about financial insecurities. Interestingly, they provided the Due Diligence team with a pamphlet on Portland in which there were things noted like loss of jobs; Portland is struggling with similar issues as us and Gerding Edlen didn't mention how they contribute to solutions.
- b. US2: Like this team for its creative use of space; they talked about bringing in pop up centers to get the business component rolling right away. US2 was clearly focused on job creation, and the range of solutions that could be used to support local businesses and entrepreneurs.

6. Wig Zamore, co-chair of CAC, provides presentation with slides, pictures from Due Diligence trip

7. Q&A between CAC, Wig/Mike

- a. Wig clarifies that the team only went into commercial space at Gerding Edlen. While other teams spent time marketing, Gerding Edlen spent time showing us their product.
- b. Clarify: The Due Diligence report indicates that The Abbey Group was somehow involved in opening of green line station; but this station had been open long before but the station had just dormant. Real story is that Abbey Group involved in the \$5 million

renovation of station, nothing like the scale of infrastructure needed in USQ.

- c. Quality of Construction: GE's stand out for design and construction, but all four teams are very good (without parsing too finely, says Wig)
  - d. It's clear the Federal leads with retail as its strategy. What are the others' strategies? Wig explains that Magellan is led by housing, while the Abbey Group and GE are "more opportunistic" across product types.
  - e. What's city's plan for Boynton Yards and how does this play into the mix? Ed O'Donnell explains that it is not part of the RFQ, but it is part of the urban renewal plan. Need more planning around Boynton Yards.
  - f. How "Somerville-like" were these places? They don't look like USQ at all from the pictures (Joe Beckmann). They looked very gentrified. Wig says that places look, in part, by the places they are located. Ex/ San Jose, high tech center of CA. Portland pretty white. Large gay population in Brewery Blocks.
  - g. Mix of modes? Where was this particularly harmonious? Portland a model for this nationwide, GE a model. Federal prohibits bicycle parking on sidewalks at Santana Row.
  - h. Adaptive Reuse: GE had some stellar examples of adaptive reuse in Brewery Blocks, Armory building. Abbey has examples here. University Village in Chicago.
  - i. Abbey Group – concerns about not having been a master developer before? Some projects have been sizable and in the same neighborhood, but not necessarily the master development of an area. Projects in given neighborhoods occurred at different periods in time.
  - j. Housing: The Abbey Group paid into a fund for the Viridian so affordable housing could be built elsewhere. Chicago builds 20% affordable per city ordinance; Portland doesn't have affordability components but still has built a lot. Federal incorporates affordable units into buildings per city ordinance (e.g. 12.5% in Somerville, 0% in San Jose).
  - k. Lack of passion by Portland team: Mike and Wig are not impressed by marketing, impressed by the buildings that speak for themselves.
8. CAC members' specific interests:
- a. Rebecca Schrumm: Concerned with business and finance– thought that Federal/Abbey had fewer specifics for supporting businesses; GE and US2 had more specific plans for protecting small businesses (e.g. pop-up spaces). Job creation: disappointed in Federal's focus on "retail then jobs will come" mentality. US2 had best approach to job creation; Abbey also included ideas, but GE almost too "laid back".
  - b. Mike Dacey: Impressed by Abbey Group's plan to create 200k sq. ft. of commercial space right off the bat. Would like to see commercial space take priority.

- c. Joe Beckmann: Likes GE the most because they're green and it enhances Somerville national model, tax advantages. Like US2 "modestly" but gentrifying Maxwell St. was a bad idea but it was a good example of scale. Impressed by US2 people. He likes Federal more than he thought he would, but don't think they're a fit for USQ. Less impressed by Abbey than they thought they'd be. Doesn't trust Abbey.
- d. Erik Neu: Prefers US2 and GE – prefers US2 but close – analysis matrix. But likes US2 because of its focus on what works today and retaining what's unique about Union Square but moving it forward; also liked specific plans about growing businesses, jobs, building off Kendall Square. Likes GE because of its buildings, design. But do we want to just be a "really cool Portland"? Likes the Abbey Group because it's a family group, but still has concerns over finances if a hiccup in the economy occurs. Federal just luke warm. Capable, but average.
- e. Mimi Graney: What are people actually going to build? It's about the quality of construction, design. Trends change. FRIT – putting all eggs in one basket. Not an option. Abbey Group – doesn't really like what the Fenway has become, not impressive. Leaves GE and US2. Initial impression of US2 was negative but now appreciates their work. Worry about GE's ability to deliver commercial in the way we want.
- f. Kat Rutkin: Interested in local economy so US2 and Abbey Group stood out. US2's research initially irritating, but now appreciate what they've done to understand local economy. Looking to create a specific strategy for USQ, not just replicate past projects. Seem sensitive to local, small businesses. Abbey Group also had strong ideas around flexible leases, supporting local businesses.
- g. Molly Rubenstein: More detractors to Federal, Abbey. Very interested in the evolution chain of an entrepreneur in USQ; US2 really stands out in this regard – they seem to be pursuing support for businesses almost at the exclusion of other ideas. Impressed by quality of work, visual impact of GE projects.
- h. Robyn Champion: GE and US2, Abbey then Federal (off the table). GE's obvious greenness and design quality would be great attributes of USQ. Strong labor ties is fantastic. Really like US2, even if the big buildings are scary. Abbey Group infill in Downtown Crossing was great but still concerns about lack of experience as Master Developer.
- i. Scott Hayman: Impressed by US2's willingness to use its own capital for projects, including things like affordable housing. GE is still up there because despite trouble, they were building in hard markets. GE comes out in adaptive reuse. US2 scores high on infill. Sustainability, transportation – hands down GE. US2 strongest on jobs (at least ideas). GE/US2 score high in sustaining local businesses.
- j. Eric Fellingner: All have patient capital – but when push comes to shove, who uses their capital in which ways? E.g. Federal responds to REIT shareholders. Eric is particularly interested in design, family-orientation. GE – US2/Abbey Group – Federal. Federal's approach to retail/restaurants first shows a misunderstanding of "this" part of Somerville.

- k. Philip Parsons: Federal off the table because we need diversity of developments. Scale of Chicago, scale of Portland – this is where they come from. Portland much more like Somerville than Chicago in terms of scale, struggles with job creation. US2’s “obsessive engagement with this community” – not sure what to make of it but they have great ideas.
- l. Pat McCormick: Place more emphasis than some on pedestrians, bicycling – the way the world is changing. Fewer cars per capita. What we think of retail and workspaces is changing, too. That leaves us with GE/US2. Didn’t see US2 as strong initially, but does now. Prefers Federal over the Abbey Group – all eggs in one basket not a huge concern because of all of their other assets. The Fenway is not bike friendly, more car-oriented than ever before.
- m. Anne Tate: GE very exciting because of their commitment to sustainability, architecture. US2 brought a very good team of local architects to the table – top of the line. The Abbey Group extremely strong team of consultants. Abbey Group’s local presence and patience makes them stand up well. Federal has made a strong showing, but not thrilled with how they’ve handled some things (like Partners design) during this process; lack of sensitivity to community concerns.

Rebecca: two clear choices rose to the top – GE/US2 – should we just discuss those? Anne – no.

9. Process moving forward:

- a. Wig/Anne will put together some reactions to the conversation; seems to have some consistency among members. Send to CAC to review. Discuss Monday 6/23.

10. Public comment period:

- a. Meeting was impressive. Little discussion of physical geographies issues at other development sites.
- b. Resident says she is impressed with quality of discussion tonight. Concerns over Federal process, especially when Federal has backed out of infrastructure funding and asked state/city foot the bill.
- c. Mike Dacey – clarification on next steps?
  - i. Ed O’Donnell explains that the SRA is meeting on 6/26. They may vote, may not. We are all looking to resolve this within the next 2 weeks or so and have a Master Developer on board by then.

11. Meeting adjourned